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**Bedford Named One of the Nation's *100 Best Communities for Young People* By
America's Promise Alliance and ING**

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Competition Recognizes Communities Taking Action to Help Reduce Local Dropout Rates and Create Brighter Futures for Young People

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Bedford, Mass.—The efforts of Bedford civic and community leaders were honored today when America's Promise Alliance (the Alliance), the nation's largest partnership organization dedicated to youth and children, announced the city had been named a winner of the Alliance's *100 Best Communities for Young People* (*100 Best*) competition presented by ING, a global financial services company and leading provider of retirement plans and programs for teachers. Its 2010 recognition marks the third for Bedford in the competition.

The *100 Best* designation recognizes those communities that make youth a priority by implementing programs that help keep children in school and prepare them for college and the 21st century workforce. The competition is open to all communities that make children and youth a priority, including small towns, large cities, counties and school districts. In addition to enhancing local educational opportunities, most winning communities have taken steps to facilitate improved access to health care for its young people, encourage youth civic engagement and supply developmental resources that create better places for young people to live and grow. The entire 2010 list of *100 Best Communities for Young People* and their accomplishments can be found at www.americaspromise.org/100Best

"Through its innovative and far-reaching programs, Bedford is taking bold and effective steps to help their young people graduate and lead healthy, productive lives," said Marguerite W. Kondracke, America's Promise Alliance president and CEO. "Bedford serves as an example to inspire and educate other communities across the nation to tackle the challenges facing their city and children, and to implement initiatives that give them the essential resources they need to succeed in life."

Bedford was named one of the nation's *100 Best* because of its commitment to being a healthy and safe place for young people. With a 99 percent graduation rate, Bedford has recently focused its attention on providing solutions to the health services gap for young people.

Through the Bedford Community Partnership and the Youth Policy Task Force, a coalition of residents, social services, law enforcement, businesses, government and other partners work to meet the healthy development of all Bedford children from birth to age 21.

Additionally, the Bedford Recreation Department offers art, gymnastics and dance classes for youth with disabilities and the community has several nutrition initiatives that encourage schools and after school programs to offer healthy meals and snacks.

Providing its youth with opportunities to express and entertain themselves in safe spaces is a community priority. In 2009, Bedford began "Fridays Free," a monthly series of dances and recreation events. The successful model was supported by the Selectmen and is now "The Corner," a designated youth space in the Town Center that offers professionally-staffed after school activities and evening events for middle school students.

Speaking on behalf of Bedford Community Partnership and its Youth Task Force, Youth and Family Services Director Sue Baldauf coordinated the application process and expressed her excitement at the announcement: "We are just ecstatic to be named 100 Best for the third time!

The partnership between the youth serving groups in town has led to this success and shows our respective commitment to the young people in Bedford.

I want to especially thank students Bennett Driscoll, Emily Gao, Julie Reynolds, Emily Moss, Adam Fisher, and Samantha Karanian for writing youth testimonials for our submission – it is their experience that not only impacts the selection but informs our on-going efforts."

Town Manager Richard Reed added, "Being recognized again by America's Promise Alliance affirms that Bedford's efforts and collaboration among Town citizens and staff have enhanced the depth of our youth services. We are proud of our collective achievement."

On September 21, 2010, Bedford and the other winners spanning 37 states were recognized at a ceremony in front of the Washington Monument on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Each of the winning communities was formally recognized with a designation on a map of the U.S., illustrating the geographic and demographic diversity of the winning 100 communities. In addition to the

100 Best

distinction, Bedford and the other top communities will receive two road signs identifying the city as one of

100 Best

, as well as a trophy to be presented to local officials later this year, possibly as part of fall Town Meeting in November.

Alliance Chair Alma Powell and President and CEO Marguerite W. Kondracke revealed the list of winners during the national celebration. They were joined by Rhonda Mims, president of the ING Foundation and senior vice president, ING's Office of Corporate Responsibility and Multicultural Affairs and *Twilight's* Kellan Lutz, who both share a passion for the development of young people.

"ING is committed to children's education and to the advancement of education initiatives that prepare them for successful futures," said Mims. "Our support for *100 Best* demonstrates our goal of honoring communities like Bedford that produce real, measurable results for improving the lives of young people."

The competition is one element of the Alliance's Grad Nation campaign, a 10-year initiative to mobilize all Americans to take action in their communities to end the high school dropout crisis and prepare young people for college and the 21st century workforce. More than 7,000 students drop out each school day in the U.S., resulting in 1.3 million young people a year. To help decrease these numbers, the Alliance is more committed than ever to recognizing communities – regardless of size, location or history – that are taking real action to help more young people stay in school and graduate on time.

"*100 Best* is an essential building block of an inspiring national movement that gives everyone a chance to ensure every young person graduates," said Powell. "These winning communities refuse to let the challenges they face be the determining factor in the lives of their children and youth. Instead, they are helping to build an infrastructure of assertive, successful and dynamic young people that are the future of this country."

About *100 Best*

First held in 2005, *100 Best* honors communities large and small, rural and urban, that are making progress to help young people achieve their potential, which includes earning a high school diploma, securing a good job, and playing an active, productive role in America's economic vitality. This year, more than 350 communities in 50 states registered online for the *100 Best* distinction at www.americaspromise.org/100best.

Being a *100 Best* community not only demonstrates commitment to local young people; the award fosters local pride, bolsters economic development and shines the spotlight on the people and programs that are building better communities. The competition also facilitates the sharing of best practices among communities nationwide regarding education, access to health care, reading score improvement, youth service and pre-school enrollment, among many other areas.

About America's Promise Alliance

America's Promise Alliance is the nation's largest partnership organization dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth. Through the collective power of our partner network, we raise awareness, support communities and engage in nonpartisan advocacy to ensure that young people receive more of the fundamental resources they need to graduate high school prepared for college, work and life. Building on the legacy of our Founding Chairman General Colin Powell, the Alliance believes the success of our young people is grounded in the Five Promises—caring adults; safe places; a healthy start; an effective education; and opportunities to help others. For more information about America's Promise Alliance, visit www.americaspromise.org

About ING

ING is a global financial institution of Dutch origin offering banking, investments, life insurance, and retirement services to over 85 million residential, corporate and institutional clients in more than 40 countries. With a diverse workforce of about 115,000 people, ING is dedicated to setting the standard in helping our clients manage their financial future.

In the U.S., the ING (NYSE: ING) family of companies offers a comprehensive array of financial services to retail and institutional clients, which includes life insurance, retirement plans, mutual funds, managed accounts, alternative investments, direct banking, institutional investment management, annuities, employee benefits, and financial planning. ING holds top-tier rankings in key U.S. markets and serves nearly 30 million customers across the nation.

ING's diversity management philosophy and commitment to workplace diversity, diversity marketing, corporate citizenship and supplier diversity fosters an inclusive environment for employees that supports a distinctive product and service experience for the financial services consumer. For more information, visit www.ing.com/us.

About the ING Foundation

The ING Foundation's mission is to improve the quality of life in communities where ING operates and its employees and customers live. Through charitable giving and employee volunteerism, the foundation focuses on programs in the areas of financial literacy, children's education, diversity, and environmental sustainability. For more information, visit www.ing-usafoundation.com

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